

**CLAIMS**

What is claimed is:

- 5           1.     A method for operating a computer-based accounts payable system, said method comprising:
  - a.     inputting a bill, said bill comprising a first billing code;
  - b.     determining whether said first billing code is present a first budget database, said first budget database comprising a first plurality of billing codes and a first
 10    plurality of budget amounts, wherein each billing code of said first plurality of billing codes has an associated budget amount from said first plurality of budget amounts; and
  - c.     further processing said bill as follows:
    - i.     if said first billing code is present in said first plurality of billing codes, approving payment of the budget amount associated with said first billing code
 15    in said first budget database; and
    - ii.    if said first billing code is not present in said first plurality of billing codes, approving payment of a budget amount associated to said first billing code in a second budget database.
- 20           2.     The method of claim 1 wherein said first billing code is associated with a task.
3.     The method of claim 2 further comprising the step of checking whether said task has been completed before approving payment of said bill.
- 25           4.     The method of claim 1 wherein said bill further comprises a billing amount associated with said first billing code.

5. The method of claim 4 further comprising the step of checking whether the billing amount matches the budget amount associated with said first billing code.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein the step of checking whether the billing  
5 amount matches the budget amount associated with said first billing code before approving payment of said bill.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein said bill is in the form of an electronic spreadsheet and said step of inputting said bill is performed by inputting the electronic  
10 spreadsheet into the computer system.

8. A computer-based system for handling accounts payable, said system comprising:

- a. means for inputting a bill that comprises a first billing code;
- 15 b. means for determining whether said first billing code is present in a first budget database that comprises a first plurality of billing codes and a first plurality of budget amounts, wherein each billing code of said first plurality of billing codes has an associated budget amount from said first plurality of budget amounts; and
- c. means for further processing said bill as follows:
  - 20 i. if said first billing code is present in said first plurality of billing codes, approving payment of the budget amount associated with said first billing code in said first budget database; and
  - ii. if said first billing code is not present in said first plurality of billing codes, approving payment of a budget amount associated to said first billing code  
25 in a second budget database.

9. The system of claim 8 wherein said first billing code is associated with a task.

10 The system of claim 9 further comprising means to check whether said task has been completed before approving payment of said bill.

11. The system of claim 8 wherein said bill further comprises a billing amount  
5 associated with said first billing code.

12. The system of claim 11 further comprising means to check whether the billing amount matches the budget amount associated with said first billing code.

10 13. The system of claim 12 wherein the step of checking whether the billing amount matches the budget amount associated with said first billing code before approving payment of said bill.

14. The system of claim 8 wherein said bill is in the form of an electronic  
15 spreadsheet and said means for inputting the bill comprises means for inputting the electronic spreadsheet into the computer system.

15. A computer-based system for handling accounts payable, said system comprising:

- 20 a. means for inputting a bill that comprises a billing code and a billing amount associated with said billing code;
- b. means for determining a first budget amount associated with said first billing code from a budget database; and
- c. means for further processing said bill as follows:
- 25 i. if said first budget amount is the same as said billing amount, approving payment of said first the budget amount; and
- ii. if said first budget amount is more than said billing amount, approving payment of said billing amount.

16. The system of claim 15 wherein said first billing code is associated with a task.

17. The system of claim 16 further comprising means to check whether said task has been completed before approving payment of said bill.

18. The system of claim 15 wherein said means for further processing said bill further comprises means to not approve payment if said first budget amount is less than said billing amount.

19. The system of claim 18 further means to automatically generate a communication if payment is not approved.

20. The system of claim 15 wherein said bill is in the form of an electronic spreadsheet and said means for inputting the bill comprises means for inputting the electronic spreadsheet into the computer system.

21. A method for operating a computer-based system for handling accounts payable, said method comprising:

a. inputting a bill that comprises a billing code and a billing amount associated with said billing code;

b. determining a first budget amount associated with said first billing code from a budget database; and

c. further processing said bill as follows:

- i. if said first budget amount is the same as said billing amount, approving payment of said first the budget amount; and
- ii. if said first budget amount is more than said billing amount, approving payment of said billing amount.

22. The method of claim 15 wherein said first billing code is associated with a task.

23. The method of claim 16 further comprising the step of checking whether  
5 said task has been completed before approving payment of said bill.

24. The method of claim 15 wherein said step of further processing said bill further comprises not approving payment if said first budget amount is less than said billing amount.

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25. The system of claim 15 wherein said bill is in the form of an electronic spreadsheet and said step of inputting the bill comprises inputting the electronic spreadsheet.

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